

Gamefreaks

PLAYSTATION 2

PC

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GAMECUBE



XBOX[®] LIVE[™]

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INSIDE:

CRICKET 2004
PRINCE OF PERSIA THE SANDS OF TIME
GRAND THEFT AUTO DOUBLE PACK
PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2
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GLADIUS
SECRET WEAPONS OVER NORMANDY
URU AGES BEYOND MYST
EYE TOY : GROOVE
SMACKDOWN HERE COMES THE PAIN
MARIO KART DOUBLE DASH
MEDAL OF HONOR INFILTRATOR

MAX PAYNE™ 2

THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE

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WWW.MAXPAYNE2.COM



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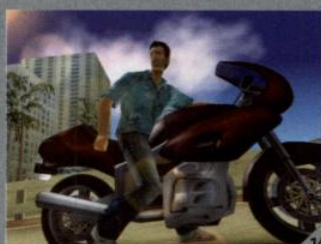
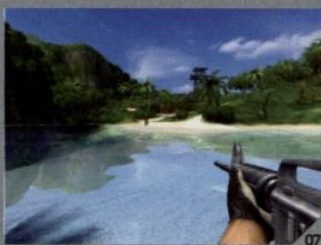
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read me

A few years ago I was fortunate enough to get online using a Dreamcast console. I can still remember the thrill of online competition from the comfort of my living room sofa and this month it's all starting to coming back to me. Microsoft is giving local Xbox gamers the chance to take their A-Game online, via the Xbox Live network and Sony Computer Entertainment NZ has announced their own plans for online play next year. Though its still obviously early days the signs look good for console gamers who have had enough of flying solo. You can read about Xbox Live and its recent launch on page 8.

There are a lot of good games in this month. EA Sports follow-up Rugby 2004 with the long awaited sequel to Cricket 2002 is finally here. We also take a look at Prince of Persia The Sands of Time and GhostHunter, two of the best looking new PS2 titles around.

On the Xbox, we review Counter-Strike, Project Gotham Racing 2 as well as Rockstar Games' long awaited Grand Theft Auto Double Pack, which packages together GTA III and GTA Vice City.

That's it from us for this year. We don't produce a January issue so we're on holiday as you read this. We'll be back in February, with all the best from the rapidly evolving world of video gaming. Until then, on behalf of the Gamefreaks team, have a good Christmas, a happy New Year and a safe summer.

MEDAL OF HONOR REACHES THE PACIFIC

EA's original WWII shooter series is set to make a return early in 2004

The rather exciting Medal of Honor series has, throughout its consistently quality release schedule, made its way around most of the more famous theatres of war in Europe. This time however EA have made a leap over a body of water or two into the Pacific to feature campaigns in places like Guadalcanal and Papua New Guinea, and things are looking frighteningly good.

Featuring a brand new game engine sculpted from the ground up, the massively complex outdoor environments include dense jungles and pacific islands and feature a rather advanced physics model that sees water behave, um, as it should, and bodies fold over and crumple to the ground or fly through the air Arnold-style if they tread on a mine.

Squad tactics have also had a makeover and realistically model the behaviour and fighting styles of both sides. If you take out the leader of a Japanese unit you'll be confronted by loads of freaked out infantry, some of whom will lose it totally and run at you screaming.

As we have all come to expect from the Medal of Honor series the sound effects are stunning, recorded in various locations throughout the Pacific Rim and also in shooting ranges with the proper weapons.

With Pacific Assault scheduled to be out in the shops in January we'll have more on this great looking title soon.



If EA makes good on its intriguing ideas Pacific Assault will be the most impressive MOH title yet

THE WARRIORS ON PS2: CAN YOU DIG IT?

Rockstar Games have announce new title based on 80s cult classic



The Warriors must survive a hostile, nocturnal world of train stations, baseball bat wielding gang members and lethal, gun toting women

Rockstar Toronto is currently developing The Warriors(TM), a game based on Paramount Pictures' classic 1979 gritty gang drama of the same name, directed by Walter Hill, in which the Warriors are mistakenly accused of killing a big time gang leader Cyrus the Virus. Soon, they have every gang in New York City out to get revenge. The Warriors must make their way from one end of the city to their turf on the other side.

Kelly Sumner, Chief Executive Officer of Take-Two, commented "we are confident that the Warriors product in development at Rockstar Toronto, will match the outstanding creative accomplishments that Rockstar has achieved with its titles to date."

NEWS SHORTS

>> Sony Computer Entertainment New Zealand (SCE NZ) is launching PlayStation 2 Online in New Zealand next March, with beta testing already underway. A select group of 200 local gamers has been chosen to be the first in the country to trial Online Gaming for PS2. They will be provided with an Online Gaming Kit consisting of a Network Adaptor and game to test the system before its launch in the new year.

>> Nintendo has locked down a date for Capcom's Gamecube action shooter, Killer 7. Nintendo has added a seemingly provisional June 30 release down for the stylish looking game.

>> New Zealand is now the most successful Xbox territory in the world. With 53 per cent market share in console sales, more than 50,000 Xboxes in Kiwi homes and the launch of Xbox Live!, Xbox is looking very strong this Christmas.

"The last three weeks have been amazing," says Wilf Robinson, country head, HED division. "Three weeks ago we got 51 per cent, last week we achieved 43 per cent and this week we came in at 53 per cent. "These results are huge in world terms and demonstrate the tremendous support shown by New Zealand gamers for the Xbox brand."

>> Actor Ray Liotta, took the award for best performance by a human in the 2002 hit video game Grand Theft Auto: Vice City at the first Spike TV Video Game Awards in Las Vegas. Liotta gives voice to the lead character Tommy Vercetti in the criminal adventure game, which was the best seller of 2002.

>> Rockstar Games has announced plans to bring shoot 'em up Max Payne to Nintendo's Handheld. Max will be able to use eight weapons over ten levels of gameplay, where players will need to make full use of the game's signature bullet time, which has been fully realised on the diminutive handheld.

MOST WANTED

Polyphony Digital director Kazunori Yamauchi is talking about more than 50 courses and more than 500 cars for Gran Turismo 4, the next installment in the record-breaking series.

Again the game is split into track, rally and street racing. There's a demo out that offers three tracks and a handful of cars for each. Japan's Tsukuba circuit represents the licensed racetrack component, the Grand Canyon course offers rallying action, and an urban road race through New York City.



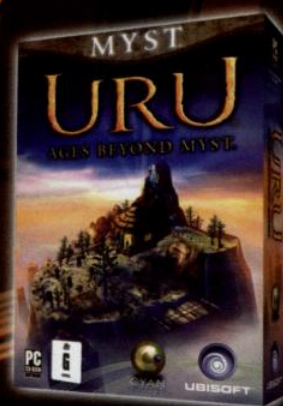
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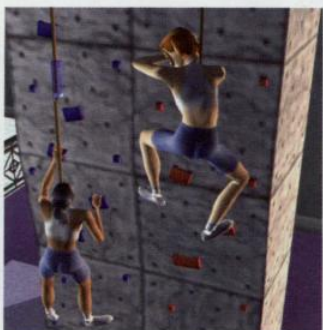
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PlayStation®2



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THE SIMS BUSTIN' OUT

PS2/XBOX/CUBE ■ EA GAMES

Last year Maxis' Sims franchise made an effortless transition to the consoles. This sequel blends the familiar core gameplay with the accessibility of the newer console versions.

MAFIA

PS2/XBOX ■ TAKE 2 INTERACTIVE

Mafia is a third person 3D action title set in the in an era of big bands, speakeasies, zoot suits and Model Ts. Formerly a PC title, Mafia is out for on PS2 and Xbox next month.

CROUCHING TIGER HIDDEN DRAGON

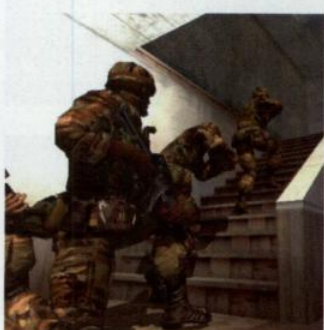
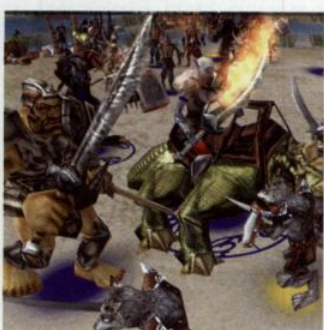
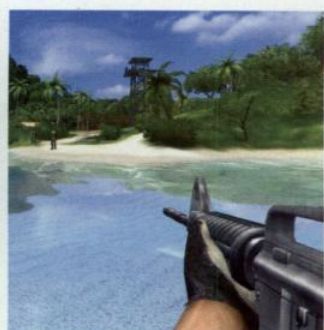
PS2/XBOX ■ UBISOFT

Later this month PC gamers will be able to choose whether to become righteous Jedi or succumb to the power of dark side in BioWare Corps' Star Wars-inspired RPG.

1080 AVALANCHE

CUBE ■ NINTENDO

The mountain is crowded with snowboarding titles this year. SSX 3, Amped 2 and now 1080 Avalanche, the Cube exclusive with a big bags of tricks and a good sense of speed.



STACY JONES' RUGBY LEAGUE

PS2/XBOX ■ TRU BLU

Local developers Sidhe have delivered a great looking Rugby League title with detailed gameplay mechanics that include high tackles, fends, offloads and gang tackling

LORDS OF EVERQUEST

PC ■ UBISOFT

Developers Sony Online Entertainment stuck close to the accepted RTS formula (as seen in WarCraft III) and as a result Lords of EverQuest is shaping up very nicely.

FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR

XBOX ■ THQ

Destined to be one of next year's biggest Xbox hits, THQ's Full Spectrum Warrior is team-based tactical combat at its best, and yes, of course, it'll exploit Xbox Live.

FAR CRY

PC ■ UBISOFT

Not just a beautiful looking FPS title, Far Cry comes with a full-featured editor lets average players with little 3D programming knowledge dabble with level creation.

XBOX: LIVE AND DIRECT

Microsoft's online gaming network up and running



The war in the gaming world has gone beyond, well, games. Microsoft's aim to lead the world in gaming through its Xbox has taken a different tack in the last couple of years. Instead of going head-on with the likes of Sony's PlayStation 2, in terms of making bigger, better and badder games, Xbox is going for that something different. And more than year after the launch of Xbox Live! - that something different appears to be going pretty well.

While we are just starting to crack onto Live, it has been around since November last year and it won't be until March next year when it will be rivalled (PlayStation 2 will make a network adaptor available here in March 2004). Live has hit eight new countries in October and now has a presence in 19 countries. According to Xbox, online video gaming has already exceeded expectations. There are 15 million online gaming sessions of Xbox games taking place each week. It was predicted that 16,000 Xbox users would go online when it launched in the UK and only a few months after, that figure is



The thrill of competition improves the quality of any game, especially one with guns and destruction. MechAssault and Star Wars Jedi Academy both have Xbox Live features



Xbox Live will allow you to challenge riders around the globe. Gamers can track stats, trade replays with friends, and download new content

already more than 50,000.

There has been a lot of hype about Live, but what exactly is it?

Well it basically means there is no need to take on your mum at car games, heck you don't even need to bother venturing off your couch and making friends. All you need is a broadband, or fast, internet connection and you can play against the best and the worst competitors around the world via the net. The only catch is that many of us still don't have the broadband connections for our home computers so it will mean an upgrade.

Live launched earlier than initially proposed in New Zealand with a December 4 starting date, which means that kiwi gamers share Australian Live (one of the few things we are prepared to share with the Ockers). But, according to Microsoft NZ gamers will still get the full benefit of all Live's features and services.

In March 2004 the service will move to be hosted here, with Live showing an updated dashboard, including New Zealand details on it. Gamers

can continue to use any existing subscription, or purchase a new subscription and register as a New Zealander.

More than 50 games have already been made Live compatible including Project Gotham Racing 2, Top Spin, Amped 2, NFL Fever, Midtown Madness 3 and MechAssault. One hook Xbox is using with Live is by offering free downloads of levels and equipment, enabling gamers to expand and extend any Xbox Live-enabled product. There are at least a dozen on offer with this added bonus including Colin McRae Rally 04, Brute Force, Burnout 2 and Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell. While other bonuses for those who aren't exactly hot on the gaming controller, Live offers instant messaging and internet telephony, which means bringing friends from afar, closer.

The concept of gaming online is not necessarily new as Sega's Dreamcast had the option also, but that ceased in October (Nintendo's Gamecube also has a broadband adapter option). But, in the effort of winning



over the heart's of consumers, Xbox has gone all out to make this a success by offering plenty of bells and whistles.

An introductory offer has been launched here as a starter kit, which includes *Crimson Skies* and *Project Gotham Racing 2*, a free subscription card, headset and full instructions. The headset means you can talk

with players you are battling, even if they are across the other side of the world. So without a keyboard or a mouse it is your only communication option. You can also use the option of masking the tone of your voice, so if you don't want to feel bad at being beaten by a 9-year-old then just tweak the tone.

Via a Gamertag you have your own online identity, with a user name of your choice (preferably one that can be said easily). However, this maybe lost when Live transfers from the Aussie to kiwi hosting.

You will also be able to create a list of on-line friends, giving the option of checking out what they are playing or inviting them to play your game. The list will show who is playing and can continuously be added to.

A Matchmaking option means you can find Xbox Live! games and players to suit your mood. It becomes most valuable when you first sign-up and don't have any online friends, and is in essence the drive-through service of Live. You can get straight into a game without fussing about with levels and modes - basically you want to play and you want to play now! But an Opti match mode means that you can put yourself against a player of your choice, when you want and where you want. But, if you can't find what you're after then you can host a game and invite people.

The roll-out of Live is going hand-in-hand with an increase of Xbox exclusive games, giving the lads and ladies at Microsoft a good start in on-line console gaming.



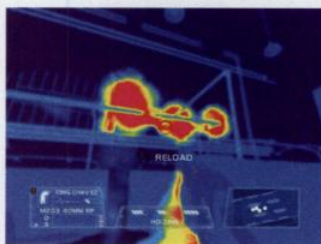
Players of *Unreal Championship* who want to try a little bit of Xbox Live action can now automatically update the game through the online service.



COUNTER-STRIKE

MICROSOFT

It probably lacks the impact that it had in its halcyon days, but the rapid-fire, team-based gameplay is still as addictive as ever.



RAINBOW SIX 3

UBISOFT

The best PC FPS titles are played online and it'll be no different on the Xbox. Tom Clancy's new tactical shooter comes with a free headset.



NBA INSIDE DRIVE

MICROSOFT

Whether its basketball, golf, or even NFL, sports' gaming online is here to stay and will be an important part of the Xbox Live's future.



V8 SUPERCARS RACE DRIVER

ATARI

Roaring over Bathurst mountain in a big, noisy V8 is one of those life affirming experiences that'll only get better with human drivers.



PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2

MICROSOFT

Featuring gorgeous cars, crisp visuals and cleverly designed tracks, *Gotham 2* is so far the best of the Xbox Live enabled racing titles.



MIDNIGHT CLUB II

ROCKSTAR GAMES

Rockstar did a bang up job with this flashy street racer. Xbox Live will make after hours street racing an even more mouthwatering prospect.



CRIMSON SKIES

MICROSOFT

Paint your plane red and take to the *Crimson Skies*, where you'll be able to talk and dogfight with your friends at the same time.



TOP SPIN TENNIS

MICROSOFT

Top Spin Tennis is a classy new Xbox title and the prospect of playing it online make its already generous lifespan virtually endless.

COMING ON **XBOX**
JANUARY 2004!

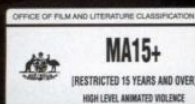


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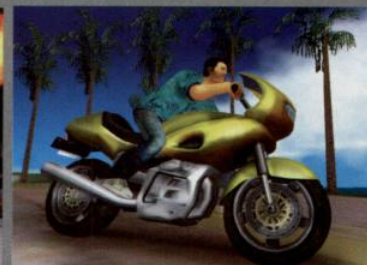
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HIGH LEVEL ANIMATED VIOLENCE

Grand Theft Auto

double pack

Grand Theft Auto III & Grand Theft Auto *Vice City*





"GRAND THEFT AUTO III IS A NATIONAL OBSESSION,
ITS SEQUEL BORDERS ON SOMETHING MORE: ART."
TIME MAGAZINE

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CRICKET 2004

DETAILS

PLATFORM:
PS2/PC

GENRE:
Sports

PLAYERS:
1-2 Players

AVAILABLE:
December 18

WEBSITE:
www.ea.co.nz



Canada's HB Studios has already given sports mad gamers the excellent Rugby 2004 and now they've got their latest EA Sports collaboration, Cricket 2004, ready just in time for summer.

HB Studios spent over 18 months coming up with new ideas and polishing up old ones. They're using the 'renderware engine', which was used to create Rugby 2004. New, more accurate motion capture certainly helps, and because cricketers come in all shapes and sizes, more work has gone into creating lifelike character models. Some of the batsmen are easy to pick, including kiwi skipper Stephen Fleming, whose languid drives look as elegant as ever.

Every player you can think of (plus a few you've forgotten) has been included in the game. On top of all of the international squads and unlockable bonus teams, Cricket 2004 has domestic teams and competitions from New Zealand, England, Australia and South Africa competing in Test matches, One-day Internationals and a new Master League, which lets you tour the world.

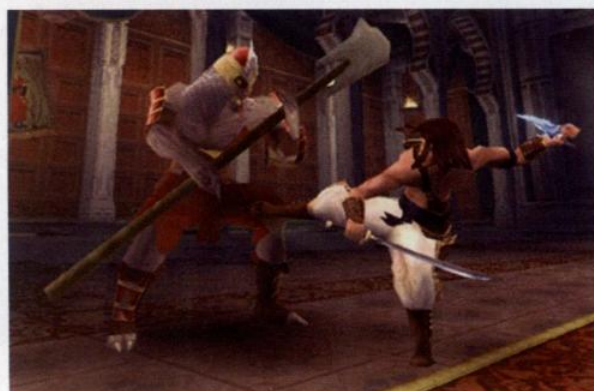
The game's control system is similar to that used in Cricket 2002 however there have been some minor tweaks. Shot selection and timing is still central to your success but players will now be able to feel, as well as hear, when they've timed the ball well. Subtle effects on the Dual Shock help to recreate the unmistakable thwack of leather on wood.

There's also a confidence meter that fluctuates depending on your situation. If your top order batsmen are belting them all over the park, confidence obviously will soar, but conversely the bowlers will get their backs up if you're losing wickets or struggling with your timing. It's a nice touch and indicative of how the balance of a match can change.



Players now have to 'play themselves in' and get settled at the crease before going for the big shots. New analogue batting control lets you stroke the ball to all parts of the ground with ease

PRINCE OF PERSIA THE SANDS OF TIME



The Prince frequently battles gangs of Arabian guards. Luckily you can rewind time, just in case you get the sand kicked out of you

Following this year's E3, the hype surrounding Prince of Persia: Sands of Time has been huge. And now that we've had some hands-on time with the game we can finally see what the ruckus was about.

This reworking of Jordan Mechner's 1989 classic tale is flat out brilliant, but it's tough to pigeonhole: Sands of Time is part platform puzzler, part 3D adventure with fights that are frequently enjoyable, but it's the sheer beauty, and the explorative nature of the gameplay that will have you and any onlookers gasping.

The graphics are terrific. Palm trees sway, the desert sands shift in the wind. The production values are very high with substantial use of visual effects.

Like the original, Sands of Time is filled with puzzles and booby traps. Spikes pop up from holes in the ground, razor-sharp giant blades swing menacingly to block your path.

Even with a solid control system, you're going to slip up every now and then. Thankfully Sands of Time lets you rewind 10-15 seconds of gameplay so you can try again after a failed attempt.

The control is easy to pick up and quite forgiving in places. Jump onto a ledge and you'll wobble near the edge but you won't fall. Walk too far and you'll slip but catch hold of the outcropping, just in the nick of time.

With only a little bit of training, you'll soon be running up walls, flipping off poles, and leaping across huge chasms.

The Sands of Time is arguably the best 3D action adventure titles around this summer, you can find Prince of Persia in stores now.

DETAILS

PLATFORM:
PlayStation 2

GENRE:
Action/Platformer

PLAYERS:
1 Player

AVAILABLE:
Out now

WEBSITE:
www.ubi.com





IS THERE LIFE AFTER DEATH?

AFRAID SO.

PlayStation 2



If you can't beat them, you're joining them.

Don't believe in the afterlife? Neither did Officer Lazarus Jones, right up until it tapped him on the shoulder. This hard-headed Detroit cop has been drawn into the haunting horror grounds of the undead - and now, he's not just fighting disbelief, he's fighting monsters, mutants and ghouls. Prepare yourself and take a leap over to the other side.



fun
anyone?
PlayStation 2

GRAND THEFT AUTO DOUBLE PACK

DETAILS

PLATFORM:
Xbox

GENRE:
3D Action/Driving

PLAYERS:
1 Player

AVAILABLE:
Jan 9

WEBSITE:
www.rockstargames.com



For the past two summers, the number one holiday games around the Gamefreaks office have been Rockstar's GTA III and GTA Vice City. These record-breaking titles will make their first appearance on the Xbox next month, packaged together in a generous two-for-one deal that few will be able to resist.

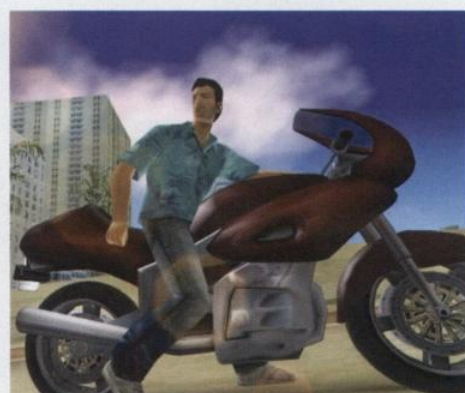
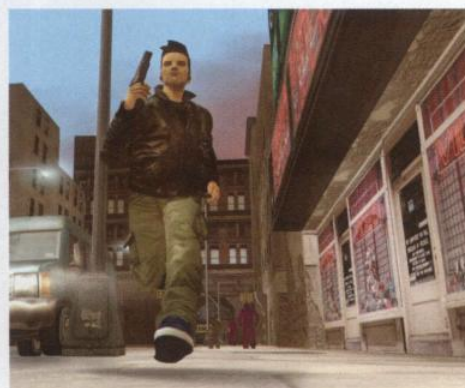
Grand Theft Auto III has been given a facelift for the Xbox: the graphics are visibly sharper and more consistent with the high gloss, more polished look of Vice City. Also immediately apparent were the swift load times which mean players can hoon across Liberty City with nary a load screen in sight. The cars look terrific, too, with a sweet metallic sheen and eye-catching colours that will make you think twice about ruining the pristine paintwork.

Liberty City is three times the size and most of it is open from early on in the game; there are more cars, boats and motorbikes, along with 50 indoor locations and more than double the number of missions to complete.

You play hoodlum Tommy Vercetti, recently released from the can after doing a stint following a botched job. Upon your release you find that the bosses still want their money, and after making you an offer you can't refuse, it's time to go to work. Once again the main goal is to make money while making your mark in the criminal underworld, just like you did in Liberty City. Only now you've time warped back to the 80s.

Rockstar had some notable stars on hand to provide the voice talent, including Hollywood tough guys Ray Liotta and Tom Sizemore and porn bombshell Jenna Jameson.

Rockstar's GTA series feels right at home on the Xbox and looks better than ever. If you've never played these, lots of challenging missions and nonstop nefarious fun await you.



The award-winning Grand Theft Auto 3 and Grand Theft Auto: Vice City are together in one collectible release, both for the first time on the Xbox platform!



Ghosthunter follows the adventures of Lazarus Jones, a Detroit cop turned supernatural demon hunter

GHOSTHUNTER

Hot on the sexy heels of Primal, Sony Cambridge Studio have gone and proven once again that they really know how to get the most out of each and every pixel available on the PS2, and this time they've really tried to scare the absolute bejeezus out of you in doing so, the meanies.

As you might expect from the title, the basic premise is that you, er, hunt ghosts. You play as Lazarus Jones, a swarthy chap who as a rookie Detroit Cop gets assigned to investigating a haunted research facility. To put it bluntly (is there any other way), All Hell Breaks Loose and you find yourself suddenly missing a partner, possessed and really mad.

In a slightly bizarre twist you're then recruited by a somewhat camp computer to weaken evil spirits by firing your ghost-gun at them which scoops them up Ghostbusters style and stores them in another dimension. In what seems to be Cambridge Studio's signature game feature you are able also to control your possessor, Astral, which in a nice twist allows you to get to places your less ethereal and far more manly body couldn't reach. As she catches more ghosts her abilities increase which is a great thing because some of these baddies have to be seen to be believed. These dudes are mean and oh so very dark, our particular favourite being a small teddy bear which grows to vast proportions and spills its stuffing as you shoot him.

Violence is extreme to say the least in this title so if you're looking to buy it for your 12 year old niece don't unless you want to be footing the psych bills but there's also plenty of humour to balance it out. Our only gripe with this game would be the lack of camera control but it's a very small complaint for a game this fun. Buy it for yourself this Christmas.

DETAILS

PLATFORM:
PlayStation 2

GENRE:
3D Action/Survival Horror

PLAYERS:
1 Player

AVAILABLE:
Out Now

WEBSITE:
www.playstation.co.nz





Whether you're using bots or playing with friends online, there's nothing like rushing some fools with guns blazing

COUNTER-STRIKE

Counter-Strike is still the most popular action-shooter around. If you're unfamiliar with the story, Counter-Strike began life nearly four years ago, as a Half-Life MOD. It's a team-based, action shooter where players can choose to play as a terrorist or counter-terrorist.

Counter-Strike has undeniable staying power. There are 40,000 people playing, at any given moment around the world, which is an incredible achievement in a fickle industry where even good titles can vanish off the radar after only a few weeks.

Designed specifically for online play, the release of this Xbox version has been timed sweetly with the launch of Xbox Live. Every Live feature known to man, including voice communication via the headset, online scoreboards, downloadable content (which includes new multiplayer maps), and you'll be able to see when likeminded Xbox gamers are online using the friends list.

Counter Strike plays out online as a series of quickie (usually five minute) rounds with two teams trying to achieve objectives such as planting bombs, rescuing hostages and such. There are seven new maps that have been added to the eleven from the PC version. All look fairly consistent with the older ones, though improved textures through all the levels mean that Counter-Strike won't look out of place next to Halo, Rainbow Six 3 and other top line Xbox shooters.

The game offers standard link up options for up to 16 players as well as a fairly thin "Single-Player" mode, which is limited to a series of multiplayer levels (with adjustable skill levels) where the slots are filled by bots. The AI players are surprisingly clever, both in their reaction time and in their quasi human-like behavior, but to fully enjoy the Counter-Strike experience, take it online via Xbox Live.

DETAILS

PLATFORM:
Xbox

GENRE:
First Person Shooting

PLAYERS:
1-16/Xbox Live

AVAILABLE:
Out Now

WEBSITE:
www.xbox.co.nz



PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2

Ready to burn more rubber than a K-Rd massage parlour? Gotham Racing is back with its second installment. The Bizarre Creations game was released in mid-November, two years after the first, and has already been short listed in three categories for the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) awards.

For those who have never experienced the Gotham experience, you don't just need to race around designated tracks. For every wheel screech, degree turn, jump and two-wheel effort you'll accumulate kudos (points), but only if you don't crash out after each series of stunts. Oh yeah, you'll also gather points for completing a stage successfully.

The more kudos you get the better ranking you'll have and the more coins you'll get - which can be exchanged for better high performance vehicles. But, don't worry you do have a much better selection of cars this time round.

One of the best things about the game is being able to haul arse liked a road raged madman around the streets of Sydney - and let's face it, it's something every Kiwi has wanted to do since we lost the world cup rugby semi-final. There are more than 100 tracks around cities, including Chicago, Washington DC, Florence, Barcelona, Edinburgh, Yokohama, Stockholm, Hong Kong and Moscow.

Gotham 2 has improved in a number of ways. The graphics are better, as you would expect, and the game is not so harsh on deducting kudos if you mess up. So with the ability to accrue more kudos then it makes it easier to peel through the stages. Like the original, PGR 2 has a great soundtrack.

However, there are inconsistencies from challenge to challenge. For example it's often harder to push a car full-throttle round a track in a timed runs event and achieve high success, than it is to race against the computer cars in a street race.



DETAILS

PLATFORM:
Xbox

GENRE:
Racing

PLAYERS:
1-8 Players/Xbox Live

AVAILABLE:
Out Now

WEBSITE:
www.xbox.co.nz



MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE

DETAILS

PLATFORM:
PS2/Xbox

GENRE:
Action Shooter

PLAYERS:
1 Player

AVAILABLE:
Dec 17

WEBSITE:
www.rockstargames.com



The sequel to Rockstar's fantastically gloomy action shooter was released and reviewed only last month. With its stylish facade and 'slow-mo' twin-gun action still intact, and even improved, from the original, it's currently sitting pretty near the top of the PC sales charts.

Less than a month later the PlayStation 2 and Xbox versions are almost ready for release which highlights a pleasing trend in cross platform releases that sees the gap, previously as long as 12-18 months, narrowing.

The PS2 and Xbox ports feature the same content as the original PC version, which comes as no great surprise.

One thing that might surprise a few is that Max Payne 2 is one of the rare games that was created strictly for the adult gamer. There is some sexual content and quite a bit of profanity. Once more, writer Sam Lake has produced a script that's bursting with deliberately heavy-handed dialogue.

The Xbox version features sharp visuals that look rather similar to those seen on the PC, sans the more flashy trickery. Using the Havok physics engine, Max can interact with his environment like never before. He can kick over rubbish bins, answer phones, open cupboards and doors, pick up objects, and more. Max Payne 2 also lets players control the lead female heroine Mona Sax.

While the PS2 does an okay job it's simply outgunned by the more powerful platforms, making that version considerably less easy on the eye. However, minor frame rate and load times issues won't overshadow the fact that Max Payne 2 offers PS2 an entertainingly dark third-person shooter with a well-crafted, noir storyline.



Massive production values include a stunt crew and professional talent for voice acting and live motion capture



This new chapter of the Myst franchise is bigger, better, and more innovative than any of the previous Myst adventures

URU: AGES BEYOND MYST

A decade ago Myst created a beautiful, remote world where gamers got trapped for days (some have never been heard from again). The easiest way to beat it was to invite a few of your egghead mates around.

Myst spawned successful sequels Riven and Myst III Exile and now developers Cyan Worlds are releasing Uru: Ages Beyond Myst.

There are new features aplenty, not least of all a fairly promising new multiplayer mode and for the first time in the series, players can choose to play using a third-person perspective switching to the customary first person perspective to take a look around the beautiful 3D locales. Purists needn't worry: you can still revert to the old fixed, first-person view – in fact navigation is far easier that way.

Uru begins with character creation and then, in true Myst style, you're forced to start thinking immediately. After creating a look you find yourself in the middle of the New Mexico desert. With only the clothes you've just chosen and no evident objectives or goals.

Like every other Myst title, Uru is all about exploration. There are eight ages and worlds to explore including a lush garden world known as Eder Gira and the surreal looking Teledahnthe with its enormous mushrooms. One of the ages, Relto, is your personal age. There is a hut there where you can change your avatar, manage and store information and teleport to the other Ages using the linking books which are added to your library automatically once you've been to an age.

Ubi Soft are adding the final touches to the online component, Uru Live, which allows players to continue the saga with regular updates and a continuing storyline. If you're a fan of the series, or if you fancy yourself as a bit of a Sherlock Holmes, you won't be disappointed.

DETAILS

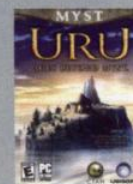
PLATFORM:
PC

GENRE:
Puzzle/Strategy

PLAYERS:
1-4 Players/Online

AVAILABLE:
Out Now

WEBSITE:
www.ubi.com



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GLADIUS

DETAILS

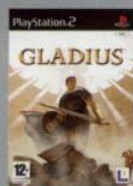
PLATFORM:
PC/PS2/Xbox

GENRE:
Strategy/RPG

PLAYERS:
1 Player

AVAILABLE:
Out Now

WEBSITE:
www.ea.co.nz



A Great War gave rise to a horrible Dark God that threatened to destroy the world. With the danger averted, war was made illegal. All combat was confined to arenas; Gladiatorial combat was part of life in every city and town across the land.

Gladius lets you take on the role of one of those mighty gladiators, but not exactly how you might have imagined. You choose from one of two characters: Ursula, the barbarian princess, or Valens, the son of a famous Imperial gladiator. However, you not only control their fate, but also the fate of their gladiatorial "school" as you progress through this tactical strategy RPG.

While you can run around on the world map and you'll spend hours customizing your fighters in Gladius' myriad menus, the meat of the game takes place in the arenas. Through a series of pretty good tutorials, you'll learn how to place your fighters, move them, and use them to best effect.

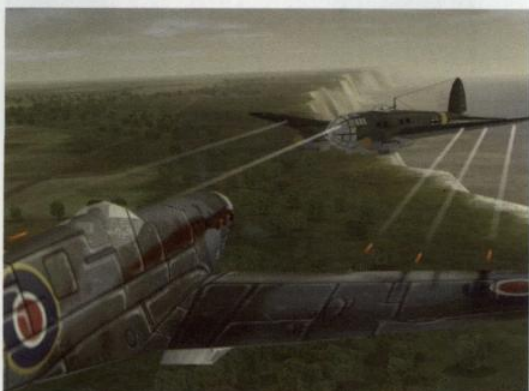
You can choose to move, or attack, or sometimes both. There are other skills you can buy as your characters progress that will shift the crowd to your side or assist your teammates. Exactly when you get to move is determined by the initiative score of the gladiator in question, and in fact, most things, from accuracy to damage, are determined by your fighter's stats. Turn-based games are getting rare enough on the PC, so it's a surprise (and a bold move by LucasArts) to see one on the action-oriented consoles.

To make the game more than just a war of numbers, most attacks involve a swing meter, just like in a golf game where you try to nail the sweet spots for better hits.



If you're up for a deep, long-lasting, highly strategic gaming experience, EA's Gladius not just a great game but, in many ways, a pioneering one

SECRET WEAPONS OVER NORMANDY



Through more than 30 exhilarating air-to-air and air-to-ground World War II missions, players engage in thrilling dogfights

Take the fun of flying an X-Wing around and combine it with the far less space oriented realm of the skies of World War II and put you in the cockpit of some of the most famous war planes ever and you could be on to a winner.

That's just what LucasArts have done and once you've gotten over the fact that this is definitely an arcade game as opposed to a simulator, get set to have some good clean WWII flying japery featuring air-to-air and air-to-ground combat missions that both puts you in the action and takes away the worry that you're going to run out of fuel, or black-out, or any of that realism stuff that takes all the fun out of games.

There are more than 30 missions to be had here in theatres not restricted to France - there's Africa, Britain and the very in-vogue Pacific too and you'll be completing said missions in more than 20 different planes. The P38, Mosquito, B-17, Hurricane and Messerschmitts of varying pedigree all feature and they have all been rendered with a lot of care. Sure, they can do stuff you'd never be able to do in the real thing but who cares? You get to fly cool planes and shoot the bad guys, what more can you ask for?

Perhaps one complaint for what should be a story driven arcade title is the story needs a little more work as it lacks flow from mission to mission but you're usually so busy targeting ground troops or taking out dams that you mostly won't notice. Battles are won by making it through unscathed and having achieved your objectives; if you find and complete the secret missions you are rewarded with upgrades.

The best thing is you'll find you're up and flying in minutes, and gasping at how good things look whatever your platform of choice.

DETAILS

PLATFORM:
PS2/PC/Xbox/Cube

GENRE:
Flight Combat

PLAYERS:
1-2 Players

AVAILABLE:
Out Now

WEBSITE:
www.ea.co.nz



MARIO KART DOUBLE DASH

DETAILS

PLATFORM:
Gamecube

GENRE:
Racing

PLAYERS:
1-4 Players

AVAILABLE:
Out Now

WEBSITE:
www.nintendo.co.nz



A lot of the key fundamentals remain largely unchanged only now karts are manned by a driver and a second Nintendo character riding shotgun.

The new cooperative, two-seater concept is fiendishly clever, encouraging players to work together. One player steers, while the other is in the back attacking rivals. They can switch places at any time with a press of the Z button. During a powerslide (initiated by the driver) the second occupant builds up the speed burst by working the analog stick back and forth. The same spirit of cooperation applies at the beginning of a race, which requires player one and two to hit the A button simultaneously to turbo boost - the passenger player can also help with handling by leaning into the corner.

The look is obviously very different, with beautifully fluid 3D treatment and imaginative courses full of room for invention, short-cutting and, occasionally, mischief. And as you would expect from Nintendo the game's control system is flawless.

On the surface, Double Dash seems remarkably similar to previous Mario Kart incarnations, but it's never been as responsive, fluid and immersive.

If you're a diehard Cube fan, and you just can't wait to hear "It's a me! It's a me!" again, Double Dash is in stores now.



EYE TOY GROOVE



We knew there would be more games released for this thing, it was really only a matter of time. The second title for one of the most popular peripherals ever launched lends a nod in the direction of the popularity of the dancing titles so prevalent in arcades these days.

If you played the titles on the first Eye Toy release you will be familiar with the concept for Eye Toy: Groove as it is based on the Beat Freak mini game that was included there. You'll find 25 tracks to wave, bounce and kick your way through but thankfully for your heart's sake you only need to play through 90 seconds of each before you can advance; although if you're in to that sort of thing there's a meter that lets you know how many calories you have burnt since you started playing.

Throughout the game you will have to strike a pose and a snapshot will be taken of you to give your mates a laugh but then this device has always been a leveler; defy anyone to play and not look marnus and things will quickly degenerate. Great with alcohol, this game might be just the ticket for seasonal frivolities.

Sounds a little too much like hard work to us but there you go.

DETAILS

PLATFORM:
PlayStation 2

GENRE:
Party

PLAYERS:
1-4 Players

AVAILABLE:
Out Now

WEBSITE:
www.playstation.co.nz



SMACKDOWN HERE COMES THE PAIN

DETAILS

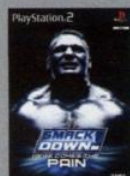
PLATFORM:
PlayStation 2

GENRE:
Wrestling

PLAYERS:
1-2 Players

AVAILABLE:
Out Now

WEBSITE:
www.thq.com



Against stiff competition from games like Backyard Wrestling, Def Jam Vendetta, RAW 2 and Wrestlemania XIX, Smackdown Here Comes the Pain has emerged as the best all-round wrestling game of the year.

Here Comes the Pain offers numerous graphical upgrades, a revamped grappling system and exciting new game modes, such as Elimination Chamber and the always popular Bra & Panties matches. The first thing players will notice are the graphical changes. All the models, animations, backgrounds, entrances, etc. have been revamped and look as good as - if not better than - THQ's Xbox counterpart, RAW 2. Plus some of the button functions have been moved around to facilitate all the new features - the square button is essentially the action button now. The L1 and L2 buttons now facilitate a countering system - L1 for striking attacks and L2 for grappling: inflicting pain on your opponents is now even easier!

Smackdown Here Comes the Pain is a polished, well-refined game for wrestling fans looking for an intelligent and more complete game system than other games currently offer. The improvements and the addition of new characters, new modes like Elimination Chamber and Bra and Panties matches makes this game the undisputed champ of wrestling titles.



MEDAL OF HONOR INFILTRATOR

DETAILS

PLATFORM:
GBA

GENRE:
Action/Shooter

PLAYERS:
1-2 Players

AVAILABLE:
Out Now

WEBSITE:
www.ea.co.nz



This is EA's second attempt at bringing their Medal of Honor series to Nintendo's handheld. Last years effort was seriously flawed but Medal of Honor Infiltrator is here to set things right.

Infiltrator, at its core, is similar to the 3D Medal of Honors. As Corporal Jake Murphy, you're charged with running a variety of missions against the Germans for the U.S. Army: covert ops, infantry combat, and even the occasional spot of sniping.

There are five missions, containing fifteen levels across North Africa, and Eastern and Western Europe. Every mission has several primary and secondary objectives and you can enter ammo houses dotted along the way to find rifles, machine guns, grenades and dynamite charges.

Players can also link up with Medal of Honor Rising Sun on the GameCube, which transforms your Game Boy Advance acts as a real-time map.

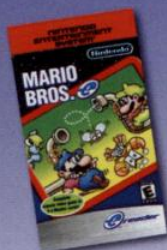
Multiplayer options allow link up with a friend for two-player combat. There are eight multiplayer maps and two game modes, Cooperative and Adversarial.

Infiltrator's graphics are the game's biggest surprise. The 2D, view works beautifully, and will remind you of other famous retro shooters.



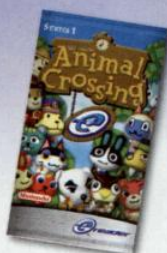
Nintendo

The e-Reader is a revolutionary accessory designed to work with the Game Boy Advance and Game Boy Advance SP!



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GAME BOY ADVANCE SP

OUT THIS MONTH...



METAL GEAR SOLID TWIN SNAKES

CUBE ■ NINTENDO

This is a fairly faithful remake of the Konami's classic stealth-action game that first appeared on the original PlayStation back in the 90s. Twins Snakes will feature some of the gameplay concepts seen in Metal Gear Solid 2, like first-person shooting and hiding bodies in lockers.



DUNGEON SEIGE LEGENDS OF ARANNA

PC ■ MICROSOFT

This expansion adds 9 new areas to the original game and should offer about 20 hours of all-new gameplay.

The expansion will also offer 2 new enemy types, a race of humanoid reptilians and a fierce race of cat-people. It also offers a new half-giant player race.



PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 3

PLAYSTATION 2 ■ ATARI

Konami's International Superstar Soccer titles have evolved into Pro Evolution Soccer. PES 2 is arguably the best soccer game going on the PS2 - everything is extremely realistic. From players who can't always control the ball, to shots that are much harder to control.



MARIO PARTY 5

CUBE ■ NINTENDO

Mario and his closest friends are trying to restore peace to Dream World by racing around a collection of all-new game boards-and tons of surprises await! New game boards, more than 60 new mini-games, new characters, an expanded one-player mode & multiplayer options galore.



ROADKILL

GBA ■ EA GAMES

Fighting for survival in a post-apocalyptic world destroyed and ruled by gangs, players unleash havoc in more than 30 vehicles with weapons such as machine guns, guided missiles and grenade launchers. RoadKill drops players into instantaneous battle with 30 core missions and numerous side missions.



STAR WARS KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

PC/XBOX ■ EA GAMES

Knights of the Old Republic is a beautifully crafted game that should appeal to all kinds of players - even those that cringe at the letters R-P-G. There's plenty of action and all the side missions, and games, such as the card game, add to the fun and give you a breather from the endless chatter with other characters.



NBA INSIDE DRIVE 2004

XBOX ■ MICROSOFT

Inside Drive, with its fluid gameplay and lifelike models (decked out in tattoos and cornrows), is taking its game online with the help of Xbox Live. Utilizing revolutionary new Web-based technology exclusive to XSN Sports, basketball gamers and sports fans can easily organise teams, leagues, and schedules.



MANHUNT

PLAYSTATION 2 ■ ROCKSTAR GAMES

Rockstar Games have produced a dark, chilling and very adult gaming experience that will shock and delight the mature audiences it was created for. As Cash you must try and survive the night in a city overrun by psychotic killers. You just know that the prudes are going to have a field day with this one.



WORMS 3D

PC/PS2/XBOX/CUBE ■ ATARI

Worms 3D is a deceptively addictive little gem of a game that faithfully takes the Worms into the third dimension. It looks lovely and with endless variety in the landscape, weapons and tactics of every game if you get hooked it will last you a very long time.



MAGIC THE GATHERING: BATTLEGROUNDS

PC/XBOX ■ ATARI

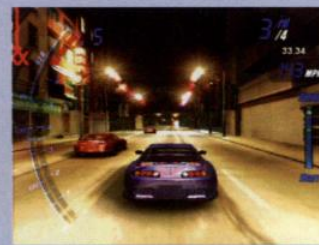
Battle in arenas conjured from the world of Magic The Gathering. Filled with faithful translations of classic Magic creatures, spells and enchantments in a visually stunning 3D environment rife with real-time strategic fighting, devastating wizard arsenals and brutal creature combat.



CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION

PC ■ UBISOFT

Based on the hit television series from CBS, the CSI game is a return to classic, first-person adventuring. This CSI game will test your nerves and intellect as you question witnesses, examine crime scenes, and analyze evidence utilizing the latest in forensic equipment.



NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND

PC/PS2/XBOX/CUBE ■ EA GAMES

Enter the world of urban street racing and high performance tuner cars with the latest title in the hit Need for Speed series: Need for Speed Underground. Take on today's most popular tuner cars, building the ultimate street machine by earning cash to pay for custom body kits.

COMPETITIONS



PS2 SUMMER PACK

We have 3 PS2 games packs from SCE NZ. Each comes with 3 games (GhostHunter, WRC III, Ratchet & Clank 2). Just answer this easy question to be in the draw!

"What is the name of Ratchet's robotic sidekick"

- a) "R2-D2"
- b) "Robbie the Robot"
- c) "Clank"



PRINCE OF PERSIA

We have a couple of copies of Prince of Persia The Sands of Time (PS2) to give away. Simply answer the following question to be in the draw to win!

"Where would you be if you were in Persia?"

- a) "In the Middle East"
- b) "In Europe"
- c) "Near Raglan"



EA SPORTS FOOTY PACK

EA Sports has provided a couple of PC titles to give away. Just answer the following easy question, send it in and go in the draw to win!

"Who does David Beckham play for now?"

- a) "Barcelona"
- b) "Deportivo"
- c) "Real Madrid"



ZOO TYCOON COMPLETE COLLECTION

We have 2 copies of Zoo Tycoon The Complete Collection to give away. Answer the following to be in the draw!

"Which of the following Tycoon games doesn't exist"

- a) "Rollercoaster Tycoon"
- b) "Railroad Tycoon"
- c) "Hamburger Tycoon"

HOW TO ENTER

Write your name, phone number and contact details on the back of the envelope, list the prize you're after and you *will* need to include the correct answer. All correct entries immediately go into the draw to win. Prizes will be drawn and all winners notified by Friday January 10, 2004.

Send to: Gamefreaks Competition, PO Box 68211, Newton, Auckland or e-mail: competitions@tenthplanet.co.nz (Maximum 3 entries per e-mail address)



The legend begins...



Sword of Mana is an adventure game with a strong RPG flavor and many unusual elements. As you develop both hero and heroine characters through intertwining storylines, you'll build them up in five job categories and master dozens of weapons and items. When you need a helping hand, you can even call upon characters your friends have shared with you!

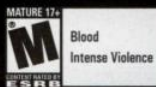


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GAME BOY ADVANCE SP™

Counter-Strike™ and Xbox Live.

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Microsoft
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VALVE



The world's number one online action game* is even better on Xbox Live™! Counter-Strike™ has arrived with graphically superior action, seven exclusive maps, up to 16 player gaming and a massive arsenal at your disposal. This is the most intense Counter-Strike™ yet. Xbox Live provides a merciless online arena where you can go it alone or assemble your own elite team. Stay in contact through the Live communicator and plan tactics for defusing explosives, rescuing hostages and taking on terrorists from all over the world.

You better practice offline first. The competition will be deadly.

COUNTER STRIKE

XBOX
LIVE

X
XBOX

it's good to play together

xbox.co.nz

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